ED 337 899 EA 023 426

TITLE A Study of the Impact of Educational Reform on At-Risk Students in Texas: Preliminary Findings.
INSTITUTION Texas Education Agency, Austin.
REPORT NO TEA-Pub-GE1-543-01
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 66p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attendance; *Educational Change; *Evaluation Methods; Extracurricular Activities; *High Risk Students; High Schools; Public Schools; *School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS *Texas

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to gain a better understanding of how the term "at-risk" is defined and applied in the schools and to assess the intended and unintended consequences of four policies: attendance, the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills exit-level examination, the no pass/no play rule, and the driver's license law on at-risk students. The study consists of three components: (1) a longitudinal study of 1,800 identified at-risk students who participate in extracurricular activities in 50 school districts; (2) a case study of eight high schools; and (3) a statewide survey of high school principals' perceptions of the effects of the four policies. Chapters take up such topics as determining the problem, reform actions in Texas, methodology of the study, establishing dropout statistics, and risk identification practices. A general discussion addresses the concept of at-risk as operationalized in the schools, whose problem it is, and whether an increase in resources would make a difference. Appended is a list of the school districts in the study, the evaluation strategy, the characteristics of high schools, the relative frequency of use of criteria for the identification of at-risk students, a grounded model of students' relative risk, and six other statistical appendices relating to the four policies. (RR)

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A Study of the Impact of Educational Reform on At-Risk Students in Texas

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by the Texas Education Agency's Division of Program Evaluation in an effort to provide preliminary information about the impact of educational reform on at-risk students in Texas.

The Texas Education Agency appreciates the efforts of the many local school district staff and students who participated in the data collection for the study and in the preparation of the report.

Dr. Catherine Clark of the Texas Center for Educational Research has also provided assistance in the data collection and analysis for this report.

Finally, we especially appreciate the efforts of Dr. Michael Baizerman of the Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota, who has provided substantial assistance in the development and implementation of this study.

This study was conducted with considerable support from Lynn Moak, Deputy Commissioner for Research and Development, and David Stamman, Director, Division of Program Evaluation.

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Preliminary recommendations for policy adoptions in this report are ideas obtained during the course of this study. Some of these ideas and recommended actions may not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the Texas Education Agency or the State Board of Education.

Preliminary recommendations in this report are based upon the data collected for the study, discussions with program staff within the Texas Education Agency, and input from participating school districts.

A Study of the Impact of Educational Reform on At-Risk Students in Texas

Overall: 1) Take the lead role at the state and local levels in the development of an overall youth policy, with special reference to the conditions leading to at-risk learners.
2) Refine the definition and usage of the term "at-risk."
3) Involve celebrities and other leaders in the arts and entertainment field in the support of the policies and of educational performance.

	Attendance	No Pass/No Play	Driver's License	TAAS
State	a) eliminate the demonstrated, unanticipated consequence of loss of credit for school year by changing the rule to allow credit by examination as it relates to the attendance policy b) offer students incentives for high attendance c) require students/parents to sign an affidavit indicating receipt of policies d) enact legislation to limit the number of hours minors can be employed e) distribute guidelines for implementation of the attendance policy	a) limit length of penalty to three weeks plus a three-week probation period	a) include policy as part of state-approved driver's education curriculum	a) permit students who have not mastered all sections of the TAAS exit-level examination after two attempts to enter a program leading to a Certificate of Completion b) acquire video-based TAAS remedial materials and make them available to libraries and community centers
School/ District	f) automate attendance record keeping g) distribute attendance policies to students, parents, and community; include policy in student handbook h) verify consistency of application of the policy	b) link extracurricular activity budgets and athletic budgets to students' educational performance c) make faculty and supervisors of extracurricular activities responsible for monitoring student performance d) actively recruit at-risk students into extracurricular activities e) involve community-based booster clubs, student/parent groups, parents affiliated with extracurricular activities, in addressing the needs of at-risk students	b) distribute driver's license law and include in student handbook	c) involve trained mentors and parents as tutors of students
Community	i) post rules in places of youth congregation such as community recreation centers, fast food restaurants, and video stores j) involve adults in the understanding of and enforcement of the policy in places where youth congregate k) provide specific incentives to businesses for active support of the attendance policy l) recommend a voluntary limit on employment for minors	f) recognize students who are successful in school and who participate in extracurricular activities	c) post law in places of youth congregation such as community recreation centers, fast food restaurants, and video stores	d) involve business in providing tutors and mentors for students

NOTE: These proposed policies do not reflect the full range of issues affecting at-risk youth, only approaches associated with the four targeted areas of educational reform. Some of these recommendations may not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the Texas Education Agency or the State Board of Education.

Recommended Actions by the Texas Education Agency

1. Continue to refine the definition and usage of the **term** "at-risk" until 80 percent of the actual dropouts are identified prior to dropping out. The percentage of students identified will not exceed the district's annual dropout rate plus 20 percent in order to prevent over-identification.

2. Reconsider all policies every three years in light of objective indicators and the opinions of students, parents, communities and school districts.

3. Develop an affidavit for parents and students to sign verifying that the policies regarding attendance, the no pass/no play rule, the TAAS exit-level examination and the driver's license law have been explained and understood.

4. Encourage regular feedback on the consequences of the policies from Parent Teacher Association subcommittees and other organized community groups and organizations.

5. Involve other state and local public and private social service workers in the coordination, design, and staffing of programs that serve at-risk students, which could lead to lowering student risk in and out of school.

6. Further involve non-formal education groups such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, 4-H, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, YMCA's and YWCA'S in tutoring and identifying students who need services and in designing and staffing programs in the schools.

7. Cooperate with the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Health and other state agencies in the implementation and evaluation of the driver's license law and other policies. For example, the Department of Health could monitor automobile mortality and fatality rates to evaluate the number of youth injured while without a driver's license and compare these to rates prior to the implementation of the driver's license law.

8. Take the lead role at the state and local levels in the development of an overall youth policy, with special reference to the conditions leading to at-risk learners.

9. Evaluate on an ongoing basis the:
   a) relationship between GED use and the attendance policy
   b) impact of the no pass/no play rule on all students
   c) linkage between driver's education classes and the driver's license law
   d) effect of the shift to the TAAS testing program on at-risk students, including its role in causing temporary and long-term dropouts
   e) use of summer school and GED as options for students not mastering the test.

NOTE: Some of these recommended actions may not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the Texas Education Agency or the State Board of Education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON AT-RISK STUDENTS IN TEXAS

JANUARY 1991

Nationally, considerable attention is being paid to "at-risk" students, learners who are less able and/or less willing to take on and perform competently in a student role. Failure to "function as a student" may be attributed to familial and/or personal troubles, incapacity, or to the inability or unwillingness of the local school to accommodate to the unique needs, wants, or style of individual students. This concern for the at-risk student is related to the nation's economic and social future, as well as the students' welfare. On an annual basis, the current dropout rate results in an estimated nationwide cost of approximately $50 billion in foregone lifetime earnings alone. Additional costs include foregone tax revenues, larger welfare expenditures, poorer physical health of the nation's citizens, and higher costs of crime. Truly, we are a nation at-risk.

The purpose of this study is twofold: to gain a better understanding of how the term at-risk is defined and applied in the schools and to assess the intended and unintended consequences of the attendance policy, the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) exit-level examination, the no pass/no play rule, and the driver's license law on at-risk students. The study consists of three components: (1) a longitudinal study of approximately 1,800 identified ninth and tenth grade at-risk students who participate in extracurricular activities in 50 school districts, (2) a case study of eight high schools, and (3) a statewide survey of high school principals' perceptions of the effects of these four policies. Two separate reports, providing more complete analyses of the longitudinal data and of the principal survey data, are being prepared and will be available from the Texas Education Agency (Agency).

This report presents preliminary findings from the longitudinal component and the case study component of the study. Other Agency data are also used to document the findings presented in this executive summary. While much of these data are quantifiable, data from the interviews provide faculty, staff, and students' perceptions in more general terms (for example, "some," "few," "many") that are not necessarily quantifiable.

FINDINGS

How many students are dropping out of school?

Based upon data submitted through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), over 80,000 students in grades 7-12 were reported to have dropped out of school in Texas during the 1988-89 school year. This results in an annual attrition rate of 6 percent of students statewide with a projected longitudinal rate of approximately 30 percent. Using the Agency definition of dropout, the reported annual dropout rate for the longitudinal study of at-risk students was 11 percent. For high schools in the case study, the annual attrition rate varied from 3 to 9 percent.

How is risk established?

- Statewide counts of the number of identified at-risk students will be available following the 1990 fall PEIMS data collection. Based upon the TEAMS summary reports from the 1989-90 school year, the percentage of at-risk students identified by the state-mandated academic criteria range from 14 percent at grade three to 26 percent at grade nine. For the at-risk students in the longitudinal study, 76 percent were identified on the basis of having failing grades, 62 percent for having failed TEAMS, and 58 percent for having low achievement test scores (below the 40th percentile). These percentages represent a duplicated count because students may have been identified on the basis of more than one criterion. The percentage of students identified as at-risk using both state-mandated and local criteria combined in the eight high schools in the case study varied from 19 to 53 percent.

- The use of the term at-risk has had both positive and negative consequences in the classroom. Based upon interviews with district staff and faculty, at-risk students are seen as a challenge and some teachers work harder to meet the student's individual needs. Other teachers assume that the student is not going to achieve and so teaching does not take place in a way that meets the at-risk student's unique needs.

- Significant numbers of students are dropping out that are not being identified as at-risk. An unanticipated finding from the site visits was that there are students who did not meet the formal at-risk criteria, but that require additional services. Two schools reported that half of their dropouts had been identified as at-risk and a third school reported 63 percent of the dropouts had been identified as at-risk. Two schools reported having identified over 90 percent of the dropouts as at-risk and three schools did not report dropout rates. Perhaps students who are dropping out that have not been identified as at-risk fall into additional categories titled "transitional at-risk" and "tuned-out" students.

  The "transitional at-risk student" may be ill for a long period of time, may suffer a death in the family, or may have to stay home to care for an ill sibling. These students may need special attention or referral to community social services. These students move into and out of risk status caused by personal/family crisis; and who, as a consequence of this crisis, may lose credit in courses because of tightened attendance policies, and may even lose course credit for a full school year because of the way courses are scheduled. A second at-risk category is the "tuned-out" student. Staff and students in the study described students who did not care, who were "goofing off," who were not serious about learning, as "tuned-out."

How were the policies implemented?

Table I provides a brief summary of findings related to the impact of the attendance policy, the TEAMS exit-level examination, the no pass/no play rule, and the driver's license law on at-risk students.

TABLE I

Summary of Findings From A Study of the Impact of Educational Reform on At-Risk Students

Attendance	TEAMS Exit-Level Examination	No Pass/No Play	Driver's License Law
• School districts have invested considerable effort to implement the policy. • The policy has made students more responsible for attending class. • The policy has resulted in increased parental involvement. • Implementation of the policy has resulted in an increase in paperwork. • Implementation of the policy has resulted in at-risk students losing credit for coursework. • Ninth grade students are the most likely to lose course credit because of the policy. • There is considerable variation in the way the policy is being implemented across schools.	• The TEAMS has provided a basis for diagnosis and remediation for at-risk students. • Statewide, 55 percent of identified at-risk eleventh grade students mastered the exit-level examination during the 1989-90 school year. • Ninth grade students are more likely to become frustrated by failing TEAMS and drop out than are eleventh grade students.	• Students and staff expressed positive attitudes toward the no pass/no play rule. • Forty-four percent of the students in the longitudinal study reported that they had been denied the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities because of the rule during the 1989-90 school year. • Implementation of the rule has resulted in coaches being more involved in athletes' academic work. • The majority of students losing eligibility because of the rule were ineligible to participate for more than one six-week grading period.	• Little information is available about the implementation of the driver's license law. • One-half of the students in the longitudinal study reported being unaware of the law.

- Data from the case study interviews indicate that districts and schools have made a conscientious effort to implement each of the four policies. For example, each of the eight schools had developed an at-risk plan and identification criteria for students, established an attendance committee, increased remedial efforts for students not mastering the TEAMS exit-level test, and implemented programs for students identified as at-risk.

- In interviews with staff, faculty, and students, they expressed that overall, the policies had raised expectations for students, staff, and faculty, and the policies established learning as the focus of schooling. However, numerous problems with implementing the policies were reported by staff and faculty in the case study schools. Interviewees perceived that some students were being "pushed-out" and that there had been an increase in paperwork. While many programs have been implemented, they are not helping all at-risk students.

Attendance

Senate Bill 417, Section 2.12, requires students to attend class at least 80 days during a semester to receive course credit and directs each district to appoint at least one attendance committee to hear petitions for course credit from students with less than 80 days of attendance. These committees may grant credit to students attending less than 80 days in a semester. The law also directs local school boards to adopt policies that establish alternatives for students to recoup lost credit due to absences and to develop guidelines, based on State Board of Education rules, that define extenuating circumstances.

- Schools have invested considerable effort to implement the attendance policy. These efforts resulted in the establishment of attendance committees to hear student petitions and to establish guidelines for identifying extenuating circumstances. Staff in the schools have also provided ways for students to make up course work and regain credit.

- Data from interviews with teachers and students indicate that attendance has improved because the attendance policy has made students more responsible for attending class.

- Based upon interviews with principals, the attendance policy has resulted in increased parental involvement.

- The most difficult aspect of this policy was its implementation. In large high schools, the paperwork required to implement the policy was reported to be problematic. The majority of the schools in the case study noted that unintended consequences of the policy included difficult and time-consuming documentation of student's excuses, paperwork for the attendance committee meetings, monitoring of grade books, and lengthy attendance in committee meetings. Interview data also indicate that these tasks are resulting in less available time for teaching.

- Implementation of the attendance policy has resulted in at-risk students losing course credit. Seven percent of the at-risk students in the longitudinal study reported course credit losses during the first semester of the 1989-90 school year as a result of the attendance policy. In the case study, the percentage of at-risk students losing course credit during the 1989-90 school year ranged from 1 to 29. Ninth grade at-risk students seemed to be the most affected. For example, in one school, 58 percent of ninth grade at-risk students lost credit.

- There are obvious differences in the implementation of the attendance policy among the case study schools. The percentage of identified at-risk students who requested attendance waivers varied from 0 to 47 percent. The percentage of waivers granted to at-risk students varied from 45 to 91 percent. The three campuses with the highest percentage of attendance waivers granted to at-risk students also reported the lowest percentage of at-risk students losing course credit due to the attendance policy.

TEAMS Exit-Level Examination

Texas statute resulting from House Bill 72 requires that students take basic skills tests every other grade level and requires passage of an exit-level examination for graduation. At the eleventh and twelfth grade levels, tests were limited to mathematics and English until the beginning of the 1990-91 school

year when the student testing program was changed from the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TEAMS) to the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The new test also includes an examination to assess student writing skills at the exit level.

- Interviews with faculty and staff indicated that TEAMS has provided a basis for diagnosis and remediation for at-risk students. There was consensus that skills being tested were minimal and necessary to function in today's society.

- Statewide, 55 percent of identified eleventh grade at-risk students passed both the language arts and mathematics subtests during the 1989-90 school year and will be able to graduate upon earning enough credits. The percentage of students who passed both the language arts and mathematics subtests for the longitudinal sample and the case study were not reported.

- Forty-four percent of the students in the longitudinal study, and as many as 68 percent of the eleventh grade at-risk students in one of the case study schools will have to retake and pass at least one of the subtests.

- By itself, the exit-level examination is not the reason students give for leaving school. This was confirmed in the interviews. Rather, it is in combination with being overage, behind in course credits, unable to participate in extracurricular activities, in addition to the lack of options for "catching-up" that the effect is felt by the at-risk student. At-risk students may be more likely to feel these frustrations at the ninth grade level than are the "resilients" who have maintained course credits through the eleventh grade.

No Pass/No Play

Under the no pass/no play rule, students are required to pass every course during a six-week grading period in order to participate in extracurricular activities during the following six-week grading period. The campus principal may waive the suspension for a student who fails a recognized honors or advanced class.

- Students in both the longitudinal study and the case study expressed positive attitudes toward the no pass/no play rule. For example, 70 percent of the students in the longitudinal study, all of who participate in extracurricular activities, reported that they work harder as a result of the rule. However, 30 percent reported that they did not work harder in their classes as a result of the rule.

- Despite the expressions of a positive attitude toward the rule, 44 percent of the students in the longitudinal study reported that they had been denied the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities because of the no pass/no play rule during the 1989-90 school year. The majority of students losing eligibility due to the no pass/no play rule were ineligible to participate for more than one six-week grading period. Being unable to participate in extracurricular activities was perceived by staff and faculty to be a factor contributing to students dropping out of school.

- Based upon interviews with teachers, students who participate in extracurricular activities are working harder in their classes in order to remain eligible to participate in extracurricular activities.

- For at-risk students in the case study, the percentage of students failing one or more courses during a six-week grading period varied from 29 to 88 percent. These data demonstrate the considerable variation across schools in the number of students failing one or more courses and may be an indication of the considerable variation across schools in terms of grading policies.

- Of the at-risk students in all the case study schools who participate in extracurricular activities, the percentage ineligible to participate because of the rule during the second grading period ranged from 14 to 63 percent. Of regular students in the case study schools who participate in extracurricular activities, the percentage ineligible to participate because of the rule varied from 10 to 37 percent during the second grading period.

- Two positive unintended consequences have been that the rule has resulted in the coaches being more involved in athletes' academic work, and coordination between the teachers and the coaches has been improved. An additional finding was that more remedial efforts are being made to ensure that students pass their courses.

- The consensus among students, faculty, and staff was that the penalty period should be reduced from six weeks to three weeks with an additional three-week probationary period.

Driver's License Law

House Bill 850 requires anyone under 18 applying for a driver's license to either (1) have a high school diploma or its equivalent or, (2) be currently enrolled in a high school equivalency examination program. Students must have been enrolled for at least 80 days in a high school program or at least 45 days in a high school equivalency program prior to the issuance of a driver's license. Students must present a form to verify enrollment at the time of application for a driver's license.

- Little information is available about the implementation of the driver's license law. However, as one indicator of awareness of the law, students in the longitudinal study were asked if the following statement is true. "If I drop out of school, I will lose my driver's license." Fifty percent responded "yes" and 50 percent responded "no." These data suggest that efforts should be made to increase awareness of the law both in the schools and in the community.

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Nationally, considerable attention is being paid to "at-risk" students, learners who are less able and/or less willing to take on and perform competently in a student role in their community school. Failure to "function as a student" may be attributed to personal/family problems, incapacity, or to the inability or unwillingness of the local school to accommodate the unique needs, wants, or style of individuals or small groups of students.

There is a large and increasing body of literature on at-risk learners and the effects of educational reform on them. This includes sources in professional literature such as Cuban (1989), Hahn (1989); in scholarly literature, Wehlage et al. (1989), Richardson (1990), Natriello et al. (1990), McLaren (1989), Giroux (1981); and in popular literature, Smith (1990), Beaver (1989), Hailey (1989), and Hight (1989).

Educators have adopted the public health term "at-risk," joined it to the social role of "student," and created the term "at-risk student." Why at this time has the term "at-risk" been so widely adopted? What circumstances are driving current interest in these youth? Why is there now increased concern and action about this social life script? (Buchmann 1989).

This is certainly not a new issue in our society. It seems an irony that today, when statistics indicate that the national dropout rate could be reaching the historic low of 25 percent, public attention has focused on the dropout problem (Wehlage et al. 1989). Current concern, however, is more related to the nation's economic and social future than to the number of students dropping out of school. It is estimated that in recent years, approximately 500,000 students per year have left junior high or high school before graduation. On an annual basis, this results in an estimated cost to the nation of approximately $50 billion in foregone lifetime earnings alone. Additional costs include foregone government tax revenues, larger welfare expenditures, poorer physical and mental health of the nation's citizens, and higher costs of crime (Natriello et al. 1990; Catterall 1985; Levin 1972).

Recent studies projecting the future demographic characteristics of the nation indicate that the nature of the at-risk population is rapidly changing. For example, Pallas, Natriello, and McDill (1989 a:17) state:

> We consider five key indicators associated with the educationally disadvantaged: minority racial/ethnic group, living in a poverty household, living in a single-parent family, having a poorly educated mother, and having a non-English speaking background. Each is correlated with poor performance in school, although not always for commonly understood reasons.

Based upon these criteria, they further noted that "the single most important factor in the school-age population of the future is the expected increase in both the number and proportion of traditionally disadvantaged young people."

These projections are similar to those found in a 1986 study conducted by Marshall and Bouvier entitled *Population Change and the Future of Texas* (page 50).

> The Texas educational system is at least near the national average in many key statistics and above average in others. Yet there is growing concern over the state's ability to adequately prepare its children for the next century. While much of this anxiety reflects qualitative rather than quantitative dimensions of education, the issue will not disappear soon. As we shall see, the challenge of providing quality education that will adequately prepare young Texans for their future adult roles may well be exacerbated by demographic shifts that will affect the size and composition of both the student and teacher populations of tomorrow.

These projected demographic changes include an increase in statewide public school enrollment from 3.2 million students in 1988-89 to 4.4 million in the year 2000 and 5.4 million in 2035. Anglo and Black enrollments will remain fairly constant as Hispanic and Asian enrollments increase substantially (Marshall and Bouvier, 1986:53). Pallas, Natriello, and McDill (1989b) note that racial and ethnic group status are correlated with other indicators of being disadvantaged and that as the number and proportion of minority children increase, the number and proportion of children in poverty will likely increase as well.

In short, the recent emergence of public interest in the at-risk student must be understood in relation to the nation's economic and social future and to anticipated increases in the number and proportion of students at-risk. Clearly, not only are some students at-risk; much of our way of life is at-risk, too. Truly, we are a **nation at-risk**.

Recently a wide range of changes have occurred in educational policies at both state and local levels and now it is necessary to begin an evaluation of the intended and unintended consequences of these reforms (McDill et al. 1986). The purpose of this report is: (1) to discuss the term at-risk and how it has been operationalized in the schools and; (2) to present **preliminary** findings from a study of the impact of the attendance policy, exit-level competency testing, the no pass/no play rule, and the driver's license law on at-risk students in Texas.

CHAPTER II

WHAT DID TEXAS DO?

Statewide educational reform began in Texas in 1983 when the Legislature, State Board of Education (Board), and the Texas Education Agency (Agency) implemented a standardized curriculum and a variety of other changes into the educational system.

House Bill 246, enacted in January 1984, resulted in the statewide curriculum. Title 19, Chapter 75 of the Texas Administrative Code, changed the daily planning of every subject and grade level. Essential elements were to be taught by every teacher and learned by every student in Texas schools (Lutz 1986). Among the changes mandated by House Bill 72 in 1984 were increased graduation requirements, passage of an exit-level competency test for graduation, the no pass/no play rule, and the five-day absence rule. This wave of educational reform continued during the 71st Legislature with the addition in 1989 of the driver's license bill and a modification of the attendance policy.

During the Texas educational reform, one approach to raising standards was to increase graduation requirements. In 1984, based on legislation passed in 1981, the Board approved graduation requirements which included four years of English, two and one-half years of social studies, three years of mathematics, two years of science, and one and one-half years each of health and economics (Chance 1986). A more rigorous grading system and the implementation of a statewide curriculum identifying essential elements to be learned by all learners accompanied the increase in graduation requirements.

As a result of House Bill 72, the five-day absence rule was created. Under this rule, students with more than five unexcused absences during a semester received a failing grade. However, in 1989, the 71st Legislature repealed this attendance policy. SB 417, Section 2.12, requires students to attend class at least 80 days during a semester to receive course credit and directs each district to appoint at least one attendance committee to hear petitions for course credit from students with less than 80 days of attendance. These committees may grant credit to students attending less than 80 days in a semester. Students may appeal unfavorable committee decisions to the local school board. The law also directs local school boards to adopt policies that establish alternatives for students to recoup credit lost to absences and to develop guidelines, based on Board rules, that define extenuating circumstances (TEC Section 21.041, 19 TAC §61.65). The compulsory school attendance age was raised from 16 to 17 years (SB 417, Section 6.05).

Texas statute resulting from House Bill 72 requires that students take basic skills tests every other grade level and requires passage of an exit-level examination for graduation. Minimum basic skills competency tests in reading, writing, and math were given at the first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth grade levels until the 1989-90 school year. During the 1989-90 school year, students were no longer tested at the first grade level. At the eleventh and twelfth grade levels, tests were limited to mathematics and English until the beginning of the 1990-91 school year when the student testing program was changed from the Texas Educational Assessment of Basic Skills test (TEAMS) to the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). This new test also includes an examination to assess student writing skills at the exit level (TEC 21.553, 19 TAC §101.2). By the 1994-95 school year, tests in science and social studies are scheduled to have been phased into the TAAS criterion-referenced test program.

The no pass/no play rule (TEC §21.920, 19 TAC §97.113 (d)-(m)) has been one of the most controversial policy changes in the educational reform in Texas. This rule has resulted in more stringent academic requirements for student participation in all extracurricular activities. Specifically, students are required to pass every course during a six-week grading period in order to participate in any extracurricular activity during the following six-week grading period. However, the rule permits the campus principal to waive the suspension for a student who fails a recognized honors or advanced class.

House Bill 850 (71st Texas Legislature, Regular Session) requires anyone under 18 either to have a high school diploma or its equivalent or to be currently enrolled in either a high school program or equivalency examination program and to have been enrolled for at least 80 days in a high school program or at least 45 days in a high school equivalency program prior to the issuance of a driver's license (TEA 1989).

The impact of these policies may have had both positive and negative consequences for at-risk youth. As noted by McDill, Natriello, and Pallas (1985:9), "The positive consequences of raising standards for students in American schools can derive only from the greater effort and attention that students might devote to school work in order to achieve than those previously demanded." More specifically, will state policies such as attendance and the exit-level examination result in greater student effort and higher student achievement and, consequently, higher graduation rates?

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY

During the 1988-89 school year the Agency initiated a study in school districts served by Education Service Center Regions IV and XX. The purposes of this study are to gain a better understanding of how the term at-risk is defined and applied in the schools and to assess the intended and unintended consequences of four policies (attendance, TEAMS exit-level examination, no pass/no play, and driver's license law) as related to at-risk students. The study consists of three components: a longitudinal study of approximately 1,800 identified ninth and tenth grade at-risk students who participate in extracurricular activities in 50 school districts, a case study of eight high schools, and a statewide survey of high school principals to assess their perceptions of the effects of these four policies. Districts participating in the longitudinal study and the districts and high schools participating in the case study are identified in Appendix A.

Year I (1988-89) of the four-year longitudinal study consisted of collecting detailed data from the school counselor for each of the ninth or tenth grade students in the sample. Information was collected regarding attendance, test scores, enrollment in regular or non-college bound (e.g., Correlated Language Arts, Fundamentals of Mathematics) courses, and other detailed descriptive information.

In Year II (1989-90), information from school records for 1,800 students was again obtained from counselors. The study design called for the counselors to distribute a data collection instrument to the 1,800 students in the sample. An overall response rate of 65 percent was obtained from the students. This overall low response rate was a function of two factors. First, not all counselors distributed the instrument to students. Second, some students chose not to respond. A report providing more complete analyses of the longitudinal data is being prepared and will be available from the Agency. This component of the study is scheduled to continue through the 1991-92 school year.

From the high schools participating in the longitudinal component of the study, eight were selected for a case study. Site visits were made to each of the schools by program evaluation staff during the spring of 1990. Interviews were conducted with the campus principal, the at-risk coordinator, a counselor, and a teacher in each school. Also, a group interview technique was conducted with two classes of eleventh grade students in each high school. In addition, a campus data collection instrument was used to obtain data about the overall school and the effect of each policy on both identified at-risk students and "regular" students such as the number of students losing credit because of attendance rules and the number of students ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities because of the

no pass/no play rule. Because extensive effort was required to collect and report these data in the requested manner, districts were paid $500-$1500 (depending upon the enrollment of the campus) to partially remunerate staff for collecting, verifying, and returning these data to the Agency during the summer of 1990. This component of the study is scheduled to continue through the 1992-93 school year.

The principal survey was distributed to over 1,200 high school principals in the fall of 1990. Perceptions of the consequences of the policies on both identified at-risk learners and regular learners were obtained. Eighty-one percent of the high school principals statewide responded to the survey. Results of this survey are presented in a separate report.

Triangulation was the research approach adopted for this study. Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena or programs (Patton 1980:108). This research approach builds on an appreciation of social, structural, cultural, and individual factors in everyday life, with particular sensitivity to how youth development is applied in schools, at home, and in the community. Existential and phenomenological orientations, along with ethnomethodological and cultural perspectives, leads to searching for non-formal policies, understandings, and meanings of at-risk as used by students, staff, faculty, and school administrators. It was anticipated that these and other understandings and meanings would be found. These orientations and perspectives are gathered through the use of data collection methods such as the interviews conducted with faculty and staff from participating high schools. They provide answers to questions such as what do faculty, staff, and students consider to be the most important consequences of the implementation of these policies, what is it like to be a student or staff in a high school implementing the policies, and what are the perceived facts about at-risk students. In combination with quantitative data from the longitudinal study and the case study, this research approach led to findings and understandings that would not have been possible through the use of any single methodology. Appendix B provides a more detailed description of the methodological approach used for the study.

Following a brief summary of the incidence of dropping out and related issues, these meanings and understandings of the term at-risk and the intended and unintended consequences of the four policies will be introduced and discussed.

CHAPTER IV

HOW MANY STUDENTS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?

As commonly defined, at-risk students are those who are most likely to drop out of school. Based upon data submitted through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), over 80,000 students were reported to have dropped out of school in Texas during the 1988-89 school year (grades 7 through 12) (TEA, 1990). This results in an annual attrition rate of 6 percent of students statewide. At this rate of annual attrition, it is estimated that the longitudinal dropout rate will be approximately 30 percent. Because there are problems with counting dropouts, considerable debate continues as to whether current methods provide reliable figures regarding the number of students dropping out. Difficulties in counting dropouts are addressed in Olson (1990), Horst and Donahue (1989), and Doss and Sailor (1987). In Texas, efforts have been made to improve the method of calculating dropout rates by standardizing the definition.[1]

While there is debate regarding the number of dropouts, there is consensus that dropout rates are markedly different for each of the three major racial/ethnic groups in Texas. According to a report titled the *Texas School Dropout Survey Project* (Texas Department of Community Affairs, 1986) attrition rates were 21 percent for Whites, 34 percent for Blacks, and 45 percent for Hispanics. The four most frequently reported reasons for dropping out include poor attendance, pursuing a job, enrolling in a GED program, or being overage for grade (ibid., TEA 1990).

The reported annual dropout rate for the high schools in the case study varied from 3 to 9 percent for the 1989-90 school year (Appendix C). Four of the schools reported an annual dropout rate of 7 to 9 percent for grades 9 through 12. Overall, the annual dropout rates for the case study high schools are reasonably consistent with those reported statewide using PEIMS and with those reported by the 1988-89 Student Dropout Research Project of the Texas A&M School/University Collaborative in its 1988-89 Aggregate Report (Parsons et al. 1990).

[1]Students are counted as dropouts if they are absent for a period of 30 or more consecutive days and no transcripts are requested from another school, school district, or institution.

Two of the high schools reported that approximately one-half of their dropouts were identified at-risk students, one reported that 63 percent of their dropouts were identified, and two reported 90 percent or more. Three schools did not report dropout rates. Of the 4,339 dropouts in grades 7 through 12 in the nine collaborative districts, only slightly more than one-third (36%) were reported to be at-risk by state criteria.

Given that significant numbers of students who are dropping out are not being identified by some schools, closer examination of the at-risk identification practices used in successful schools warrants attention. In schools where the identification of at-risk students is successful, what programs or services could have helped students who did drop out to stay enrolled in school? This question will be pursued in Year II (1990-91) of the case study.

For students in the longitudinal study, 144 (8%) of the 1,802 at-risk students were reported as having dropped out between the 1988-89 and the 1989-90 school years.[2] However, an additional 47 students were reported as having transferred to another campus and transcripts were not requested. By Agency definition, all these students were dropouts, increasing the annual dropout rate for the sample to 11 percent. An additional 10 percent of the sample were reported to have transferred to another school and requested transcripts. An undetermined number of these students dropped out after having transferred to another school. As noted in the literature, difficulties in obtaining accurate dropout counts are considerable for a variety of reasons.

In an effort to obtain a higher quality of data about a population that often has a high mobility rate as well as missing school records, school districts were remunerated $10 for each completed National Computer Systems (NCS) general purpose answer sheet that was verified and returned to the Agency during each of the first two years of the study. An underlying assumption of this approach is that as a result of being remunerated, counselors would invest more effort in determining the student's enrollment status (for example, student transferred to another school; dropped out) and obtain more accurate information. On average, a counselor completed the data collection instrument for approximately five to ten students.

During the initial year (1988-89) of the four-year longitudinal study, 1,973 students from 50 school districts and 95 high schools were selected for the sample. The students were in the ninth or tenth grade, identified as at-risk, and participants in extracurricular activities. During the following school year (1989-90), 86 of the high schools returned data for 1,803 of the students. The nine high schools choosing not to participate during the second year eliminated 47 students from the study. The enrollment status could not be determined for only 120 (6 percent) of the students remaining in the sample. Given the difficulties maintaining records for this highly mobile population, the approach used to enhance the quality of the data collection appears to have been reasonably successful during the first two years of the longitudinal study.

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[2]Characteristics of the sample are as follows:
Ethnicity: Hispanic—41%; White, not Hispanic—37%; Black, not Hispanic—21%; Asian and other—less than 1%
Sex: Male—58%; Female—42%
Grade Level: Grade 9, 1988-89—69%; Grade 10, 1988-89—31%

CHAPTER V

HOW IS RISK ESTABLISHED?

The concept of at-risk, as applied to an individual, has been used in medical and psychiatric literature for some time, yet it has only recently emerged in educational literature and policy discussions. For example, the term "high-risk students" has only been used as an Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) descriptor since 1982 (Richardson 1990:64). At-risk has a technical meaning in public health epidemiology (study of the incidence and prevalence of disease). The term was taken from its epidemiological use by the insurance industry where it was essential for determining liabilities and selling costs (insurance premium). In the public health science of epidemiology, a form of "disease accounting" (MacMahon, Pugh, and Ibsen 1960), risk refers to "those persons who are capable of having or contracting a disease . . . ." In this sense, "persons" refers to a population of people, *not* to individuals. Persons have a certain mathematical probability of having or contracting a particular disease. A population probability and an individual probability can be computed. This shift from the epidemiological use of the term (population groups), to the educational use of the term (individual student), has had significant consequences for the way at-risk is defined, both formally (through policy) and informally (in the classroom). For a discussion of the implications of transferring the use of the term to educational policy-making, see Baizerman (1990).

In educational language, at-risk is a term that focuses attention on youth who have the potential for failing school; dropping out; committing suicide; becoming delinquent, drug or alcohol dependent; pregnant; or falling into other adverse states (Brown 1986). The term also encompasses such descriptors as disadvantaged, low socio-economic status, underachieving, problem youth—terms that label populations of students for whom the schools have been unsuccessful (Richardson 1990:65).

A somewhat broader definition is provided by Wehlage et al. (1989). They define at-risk learners as a category that includes various types of students and which comprises not only characteristics from state and local formal definitions but also the common sense assessment of attitudes and the student's ability and willingness to apply himself or herself to school work. For example, at-risk is thought of as:

- A tumultuous background that leads students to be less attentive in school and without skills in content mastery necessary to move along easily and competently;

- A situational problem that affects students such as divorce, illness, or economic pressures. These students are at-risk situationally, and if the situation is time limited, the problem is alleviated; or

- An attitudinal problem that results in the student not applying himself or herself to the work, being bored, not participating in the school community, and often becoming a part of the student subculture in the school that is marginal to the mainstream activities of the school.

State-defined criteria for the identification of at-risk students used for both PEIMS and TEAMS purposes include the following (19 TAC §75.195, Alternatives to Social Promotion, as amended by the SBOE in July 1990). At-risk criteria differ between grade levels as indicated:

- Grades 1 through 6: A student in Grades 1 through 6 is defined as at-risk if the student was retained (not promoted) in a grade level at least once in Grades 1 through 6.

- Grades prekindergarten through 6: A student in Grades prekindergarten through six is defined as at-risk if the student: a) did not perform satisfactorily on a beginning-of-school readiness or achievement test; b) failed at least one reading, writing, or mathematics section of the most recent third through sixth grade TEAMS/TAAS test; c) is a student of limited English proficiency (LEP); d) has been a victim of abuse, as confirmed by the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS); OR, e) engages in delinquent conduct as described by the Texas Family Code, §51.03 (a).

- Grades 7 through 12: A student in Grades 7 through 12 is defined as at-risk if the student: was retained (not promoted) at least once in Grades 1 through 6 and is still unable to master the essential elements in the seventh grade or higher; 2) is at least two years below grade level in reading or mathematics, 3) failed at least two courses and is not expected to graduate within four years of ninth grade entrance OR, failed at least one reading, writing, or mathematics section of the most recent seventh through twelfth grade TEAMS/TAAS test.

- All grades (Prekindergarten through 12): Each homeless student and each nonhandicapped student who resides in a residential placement facility outside the district of parent/guardian residence is identified as at-risk.

In addition to these criteria, the district may consider the environmental, familial, economic, social, developmental and other psycho-social factors in determining services where such factors contribute to the student's inability to progress academically.

Statewide counts of the number of identified at-risk students are not available. However, counts from the fall data collection from PEIMS will be available for the 1990-91 school year. Based upon TEAMS summary reports from the 1989-90 school year, the percentage of at-risk students identified by the state-mandated academic identification criteria by grade level are: Grade 3, 14 percent; Grade 3 Spanish version, 30 percent; Grade 5, 17 percent; Grade 7, 20 percent; Grade 9, 26 percent; and Grade 12, 24 percent. Thus, using the state-mandated academic criteria, the percentage of identified at-risk students increases with grade level. The exception to this pattern is third grade Spanish test-takers, identified on the basis of their limited English proficiency in addition to the state-mandated academic criteria.

For the longitudinal study, counselors were asked in the spring of 1989 to indicate whether 12 criteria commonly used to identify at-risk students applied to each student in the sample. These data show that students are being primarily identified on the basis of their ability to perform the student role.

(See Appendix D). The five most frequently used criteria for identification were related to school performance and attendance such as having failing grades (76%), having failed TEAMS (62%), having low achievement test scores (58%), having been retained (38%) or having high absentee rates (23%).

Four percent of the sample was identified as at-risk because that segment was incapable of performing the student role because of health reasons. Four percent was identified on the basis of employment requiring students to work more than 20 hours per week. (This may be an indication of these students being too tired to complete their school work rather than being incapable.) These percentages represent a duplicated count because students may have been identified on the basis of more than one criteria.

Demographic characteristics and the percentage of identified at-risk students in each of the eight high schools are presented in Appendix C. Students reported to be identified as at-risk using both state and local criteria ranged from 19 to 53 percent. Identification of at-risk students is, in part, a reflection of the identification criteria used: for example, state only or state and local. Two of the eight schools in the case study reported that a majority of their students were at-risk. (School number 3 used state and local criteria combined, school number 5 used state criteria only).[3] Staff in some of the case study schools were unable to differentiate clearly between students identified using state criteria only as compared to students identified state and local criteria combined. In practice, there is considerable variation among the schools in the study in terms of the identification process.

In schools with a majority of students identified as at-risk, the entire school can be considered at-risk. When this occurs, schools are able to serve only some of those learners who have been identified. A principal describes his school in this way:

> Basically when you look at our kids' scores, our school itself is an at-risk school. The criteria say that. Even though our students do meet the at-risk criteria, there are 15 to 20 percent that are truly at-risk or are going to have a very difficult time trying to graduate. The ones we work with fall between 15 and 20 percent.

Even though some schools may be over-identifying at-risk students, an unanticipated finding from the site visits was that some students who did not meet the formal at-risk criteria required additional services. As noted earlier in this report, two schools reported that approximately 50 percent of their 1989-90 dropouts were identified at-risk students and one school reported 63 percent. Perhaps the unidentified dropouts would be in two categories not included in existing formal definitions. These are "transitional at-risk students" and the "tuned-out" students.

The "transitional at-risk student" may miss school because of a long illness, a death in the family, or the need to stay home to care for an ill sibling. These students may need special attention or referral to community social services. A high school teacher describes this type of student in this way:

> There's one type of at-risk student that develops over time. Another type of at-risk student can jump up all of a sudden with a family crisis . . . loss of a job by a parent, any kind of crisis such as that produces an at-risk student almost immediately, particularly if they feel the need to quit school and help at home.

[3]The schools in the case study are not identified in order to maintain the confidentiality of the data.

The "transitional at-risk" students are those who move into and out of risk status due to personal/family crises, and who, as a consequence of these crises, may lose credit in courses because of tightened attendance policies. They may even lose a full school year because of the way courses are scheduled. At some time during their high school career, many students will experience a transitory crisis that may cause them to shift into the at-risk category. Whether their academic progress is affected by the crisis is a function of many factors including its length, the willingness and/or capability of a parent(s) to intervene, the ability of the school to respond to the individual student's unique situation, and the availability of school and community service agencies to respond to the crisis.

A second category of at-risk student is the "tuned-out" student. "Tuned-out" was a term used by staff and students to describe students who did not care, who were "goofing off," who were not serious about learning—those who did not do their school work for whatever reasons. This category comprises a wide array of attitudes, orientations, and behaviors that could be analyzed as student subcultural role performance, individual troubles, and the like. Teachers see these students as those who are easily identified by their attitudes.

> The way we identify them is through their attitude. The attitude is such an indicator . . . the attitude toward school, the attendance, and the punctuality and their preparedness. If they don't attend school, if they tend to be late, and if they don't carry a pencil or pen, they are at-risk.

While teachers recognize at-risk students as having problems in performing the student role in the classroom, as being a student in crises, or as having a bad attitude, the students' definition of at-risk assumed a different tone. When asked, "Why do some students do poorly in school?" high school students' responses indicated their awareness of the consequences of not doing well in school and their perception of at-risk students as being those who have little motivation or concern for their future:

> They won't have jobs; they won't be able to read and write correctly; they will have no life; they won't be successful; they will be runnin' the streets. They might be smart, but they don't even try.

> If they drop out, they might get a job. The rest will resort to drugs and violence, food stamps. They will probably start smoking crack or something—start spreading the AIDS virus.

> They are different because some people try and others don't. In this way they're different. The difference is that there are those who care and those who don't.

While there are many dimensions to being at relative risk of not completing high school, a common element of at-risk noted by a counselor was that "by the time they come to us in the ninth grade, their peer group is so much like them that there are clusters of at-risk students."

A recognition of these categories of at-risk students may have implications for the redirection of services inside and outside the school. For example, for transitory students who have not been identified with formal criteria, the development of campus crisis teams may be required to counsel or to refer the student and/or the family to community-based services during a period of crisis. These students may be at the highest level of relative risk because of more stringent attendance policies that require loss of credit with absences of more than eight days per semester. That is, the schools' at-risk programs may have less impact because the current formal definition of at-risk does not identify students who may be at the highest risk—those who are transitional and who may be tuned-out. A model of student relative risk is discussed in Appendix E.

Two findings briefly discussed in this preliminary report are related to the positive and negative consequences of the at-risk labeling process, and the persons perceived to be responsible for at-risk youth.

From one perspective, "the use of the term 'at-risk' labels youth as deficient on the basis of characteristics over which they have no control" (Richardson 1990:64). This approaches the notion of "blaming the victim" (Ryan 1971). Staff in the schools visited reported making every effort to avoid the label at-risk—with both the learner and parents—because of the potential negative consequences and an awareness of educational research showing labeling as harmful to youth (Schell 1975). However, they also thought that the students received more individual attention as a result of their identification. In the classroom, a counselor described the effect of the label as being mixed.

> Some teachers see at-risk students as a challenge, and they work harder . . . they relate better to the kids, and they're very successful. In other instances, they're not so successful. I don't know if it's the self-fulfilling prophecy . . . the teacher assumes that these children are not going to achieve and so the teaching does not take place.

Data from the interviews also indicate that school staff think that the *ideal* situation for serving at-risk students would be a cooperative effort—school, home, and community. Parents were seen as being primarily responsible for their children, but, as one counselor commented, "The parents do not accept the responsibility in many cases. When the parents do not accept the responsibility, then it becomes the school's responsibility." Little mention was made of the role of community services in lowering risk for students, although some schools reported excellent support from the business community.

CHAPTER VI

HOW WERE THE POLICIES IMPLEMENTED?

Data from the interviews indicate that the sample districts and their schools have made a conscientious effort to implement each of the four policies (attendance, TEAMS exit-level examination, no-pass/no play, driver's license bill). For example, all eight districts developed and implemented at-risk plans and identification criteria for at-risk students, established attendance committee(s), increased remedial efforts for students not mastering the TEAMS exit-level examination, and implemented programs for students identified as being at-risk.

Staff, faculty and students thought that the policies raised expectations for students and staff and supported the school's philosophy that learning is the focus of schooling.

> I think these policies show that we have the support of the Agency. You have to stay in school, you have to pass TEAMS, you have to pass your work if you are going to participate. I think we have had the support at the state level of the message that we have been trying to get across to parents that education is important and the number two thing is everything else . . . whether it is band, football, thespians, whatever the case may be. (At-Risk Coordinator)

Unintended consequences of the policies were also identified. Some students were being "pushed out" of school as a result of the policies, and there was an increase in paperwork. While many programs were implemented for at-risk students, they were not successful for all students. The policies were generally received by school staff in a positive way, but the consequences of implementation were not.

> The plan on paper is a decent one. It is the implementation that is frustrating. Implementation in terms of local constraints, but also frustrations with some of the state guidelines that I personally feel hinder recovery of some of these kids. (Program Coordinator)

This brings this report to a discussion of the intended and unintended consequences of each of the four policies.

ATTENDANCE

Schools have invested considerable effort to implement the attendance policy. Although efforts were complicated by the repeal of the five-day absence rule in the middle of the 1989-90 school year, the high schools in the case study reported having implemented all components of the new attendance policy. These included establishing an attendance committee(s) to hear petitions for class credit due to extenuating circumstances from students with fewer than 80 days of attendance; establishing guidelines to determine what constitutes extenuating circumstances; and providing ways for students to make up work or regain credit through evening school, Saturday classes, or other means.

While no data are available on a statewide basis, data from the longitudinal study and the case study have provided an indication of the impact of attendance on at-risk students. Of students in the longitudinal study, 15 percent reported that they lost credit for courses during the 1988-89 school year under the five-day absence rule. During the first semester of the 1989-90 school year, 7 percent were reported by counselors to have lost credit due to the attendance policy. Of students losing credit during the first semester, 37 percent lost credit in one course, 34 percent in two courses, and 14 percent in five or more courses. Data are unavailable for the entire school year. Since the new attendance policy was not fully implemented until mid-year, it is not possible to assess its effects or compare the impact of the new policy to the impact of the previous five-day rule.

Reports on the effect of the attendance policy on the overall campus varied. (See Appendix F). The percentage of all students in the high schools who lost course credit because of the attendance policy in 1989-90 ranged from less than 1 percent to 11 percent. The at-risk students who lost credit because of the policy ranged from less than 1 to 29 percent. Ninth grade identified at-risk students were reported to be the most affected by the policy. For example, 58 percent of the ninth grade identified at-risk students in school number 7 were reported to have lost credit.

Data regarding the number of students requesting attendance waivers and the number of waivers granted also show considerable variation in terms of the way the policy was implemented. The percentage of identified at-risk students who were reported to have requested attendance waivers varied from 0 to 47 percent. The percentage of waivers granted to at-risk students varied from 45 to 91 percent. Campuses with the highest percentage of attendance waivers granted to at-risk students also reported the lowest percentage of at-risk students losing course credit due to the attendance policy. The only exception to this pattern was one campus in which no attendance waivers were requested. (See Appendix G). During the interviews, staff, faculty, and students identified a number of consequences of implementation of the policy. Principals reported that it resulted in increased parental involvement.

> We established an attendance committee and involved both the students and the parents in the meeting. We have been very flexible with this policy when there has been a medical reason or family problem. We have said, "Ok, we can help you with that." They understand how important it is since they have been called to the school, that the teachers are there, that we are concerned, and we express to them the importance of attendance.

Clearly, the most difficult aspect of implementation for principals was the increase in paperwork, especially at large high schools. One principal exclaimed:

> It is horrendous! We have to keep all these individual notes, something we have not done in the past. We have to document and file every excuse. We have one attendance clerk to take care of 1,750 students. Every one of these notes has to be filed, documented, and checked. When the attendance committee calls for a student's records, she needs to pull them for the committee to review. The paperwork has multiplied.

Counselors identified a positive result of the rule as being that "attendance figures are higher because people are being made responsible for being in the classroom—students are being made responsible for being in the classroom." However, they also perceived a conflict between attendance and curriculum rules. One counselor articulated the perceived conflict between the attendance (19 TAC §61.65) and curriculum rules related to credit by examination (19 TAC §75.166) in this way.

> The attendance policy, I think, has hindered the recovery of some of these kids. In curriculum guidelines, it states that a student may earn credit in a class, regardless of number of days in attendance, if that student can demonstrate mastery of the essential elements. Yet, the attendance policy stipulates that if the student has exceeded the number of excused absences for the semester, then they cannot earn credit . . . they cannot qualify for credit by examination.

This situation may have serious, detrimental effects on at-risk students, especially the unidentified, transitional, tuned-out learner. These students, as a result of a personal/family crisis, may lose credit in courses because of tightened attendance policies and may even lose a full school year because of the way courses are scheduled. Under existing Board rules, students cannot obtain credit for course work through the use of credit by examination if they have lost credit because of the attendance policy.

Coordinators also discussed a different reason for being concerned about students being "pushed-out" of school because of this policy. They reported that since assistant principals are overburdened with attendance procedures and paperwork, it is easier for them to say to a student who has been absent, "Sorry! You've been out more than eight days. That's it, kid."

Teachers discussed the additional paperwork necessary for monitoring their gradebook and for preparing paperwork for the attendance meetings. They considered this as being the most detrimental consequence of the policy. They also reported that attendance had improved, but expressed concern about students who came to school when they should not and the lack of parental support that resulted in students losing credit unnecessarily.

> Students came back to school even when they were ill and should have stayed home. Others, who were making A's and B's in their course work lost credit because their parents did not bother to respond to the school's letter informing them that their child was going to lose credit. Those students have to attend summer school to obtain credit.

Students recognized the importance of attendance and that it had helped keep some students in school. However, they knew of friends who had dropped out because of missing too many days to obtain credit.

Student 1: In general, for most people it is a good policy.
Student 2: Well, I have three friends who have dropped out because of the policy.
Student 1: If you have noticed, it has kept a lot of people in school.
Student 2: No, I've seen a lot of people drop out this year, more than last year.
Student 3: My sister had to drop out because of it. I've even seen seniors drop out because of it.

Schools have clearly demonstrated a conscientious effort to implement the attendance policy to the best of their ability. The general consensus is that the policy has resulted in improved attendance, and that the use of computers for record keeping purposes would be a more efficient and cost-effective method of record keeping. Consequences for the unidentified, transitional, tuned-out learner are likely to be the most detrimental. That is, the interaction of the attendance policy with personal or familial crisis may result in the loss of a year's credit.

TEAMS Exit-Level Examination

Proponents of minimum competency testing believe that the testing programs motivate students, bring much needed curricular reform and stimulate general improvements in the public schools (Corcoran 1985).

A primary area of controversy regarding competency testing involves equity for socially and economically disadvantaged students, minority students, and students identified as at-risk (McDill et al. 1985). For example, studies have shown that Black students fail the tests in substantially higher proportions than do white students (Linn et al. 1982; Jaegar 1982). Some educators have expressed concern that at-risk students will drop out because they fail minimum competency tests and that the tests are more detrimental to some ethnic groups than to others.

Little research has been conducted in Texas regarding the impact of the TEAMS exit-level examination on at-risk students. Although it is known that 37 percent of the 9,696 twelfth grade students did not pass the exit-level examination in the 1989-90 spring administration, most were re-testers. However, some were first-time test-takers because they had relocated in Texas as twelfth grade students. Little is known about whether the fourth-time test-takers continue in school and attempt to pass the test again, enroll in GED programs, or drop out of school. Agency data indicate that of the 2,369 students tested in July of 1990 (out-of-school examinees only), 40 percent passed the test. Regardless of the exit-level examination results, many of these students may not have sufficient credits to graduate.

These issues take on increasing importance with the administration of the more difficult TAAS test and the addition of a writing subtest in the 1990-91 school year. It is anticipated that the passing rate for the TAAS will fall considerably as compared to the TEAMS exit-level examination. One reason cited for this increase in the number of students failing is a lack of familiarity with the material being tested. A second is that with the emphasis on basic skills in recent years, the teaching and learning of higher order thinking skills has been neglected.

Data from the interviews indicate that the TEAMS test did have overall positive effects by raising expectations and providing a basis for diagnosis and remediation for at-risk students. Yet, some students were being pushed out by their inability to pass either the ninth or eleventh grade TEAMS test. Staff and faculty expressed more concern about students failing at the ninth grade level than for students at the 11th or 12th grade levels. Despite this concern, there was consensus that the skills being tested were minimal and necessary to function competently in today's society.

Failing the ninth grade TEAMS test, being behind in course credits, and possibly being overage as well leave few options for some at-risk students. A counselor explains:

> There's nothing for him, and he gets frustrated in the classroom. They send him to the counselor. The counselor tells him, "Look at all these obstacles." He looks at the plan, and it's humongous. That is more frustration. He goes to the classroom. He becomes a discipline problem in the classroom. Usually the discipline problem is the ultimate push-out. He got to be a problem because he was never able to catch up on the basics.

Statewide, 55 percent of eleventh grade at-risk students passed both the language arts and mathematics subtests in 1989-90 and will be able to graduate upon earning enough credits. At the ninth grade level, 36 percent mastered all three subtests. The percentage of at-risk students who mastered the 11th grade exit-level language arts subtest of TEAMS during the 1989-90 school year are presented in Appendix H. The percentage of students who mastered the language arts subtest is presented for all at-risk students tested statewide, eleventh grade students in the longitudinal study, and at-risk students in the case study (by campus).

Statewide, 78 percent of all at-risk students tested and 73 percent of the students in the longitudinal study were reported to have mastered the language arts subtest. The percentage of at-risk students enrolled in the eight high schools in the case study mastering the language arts subtest varied from 32 to 95. One school reported that 95 percent of the at-risk students mastered the subtest; four schools reported 76 to 86 percent; and three schools reported 32 to 48 percent.

Similar data for the mathematics subtest are also presented in Appendix H. Statewide, 61 percent of all at-risk students tested and 56 percent of the students in the longitudinal study were reported to have mastered this subtest. The percentage of at-risk students enrolled in the eight high schools in the case study who mastered the mathematics subtest varied from 43 to 93. One school reported 93 percent of the students mastered the subtest; two schools, 72 to 80 percent; and five schools, 43 to 61 percent.

Some of the variation in these scores may be attributed to differences in the definition of at-risk applied for TEAMS purposes as compared to the longitudinal study and the case study. While TEAMS relies on the state-mandated academic criteria, students in the longitudinal study and most of the schools in the case study use both academic and psycho-social criteria.

Generally, at-risk students performed better on the language arts subtest than the mathematics subtest. This was found statewide, for the longitudinal sample of students, and for four of the case study schools. However, since mastery of both subtests is required for graduation, 39 percent of the at-risk students statewide, 44 percent of the students in the longitudinal study, and as many as 68 percent of the eleventh grade at-risk students in one of the case study schools will have to re-take and pass at least one of the subtests.

Examination of the percentage of at-risk students mastering the 1989-90 exit-level TEAMS at the ninth and eleventh grade levels shows that significant numbers of at-risk students have been unable to master the skills necessary to pass these tests. By itself, the exit-level examination is not the reason students give for leaving school. This was confirmed in the interviews. Rather, it is in combination with being overage, behind in course credits, unable to participate in extracurricular activities, in addition to the lack of options for "catching-up." At-risk students may be more likely to feel these frustrations at the ninth grade level than are the "resilients" who have maintained course credits through the eleventh grade. According to the Agency's 1988-89 dropout report, the highest percentage of students drop out at the ninth grade level (9%), not the eleventh (7%) or the twelfth (6%) (TEA, 1990). For both ninth and eleventh grade at-risk students, passing the TEAMS is a difficult requirement. This, combined with failing coursework, losing credit as a result of attendance policies, and being unable to participate in extracurricular activities results in some students dropping out.

No Pass/No Play

The no pass/no play rule has been one of the most controversial policy changes in the Texas educational reform movement, causing high school extracurricular activity programs to come under close scrutiny. Specifically, students are required to pass every course during a six-week grading period in order to participate in extracurricular activities during the following six-week period. The campus principal may waive the suspension for a student who fails a recognized honors or advanced course.

Texas was the first state to have a no pass/no play rule that required students to pass each course. Twenty-two states have required that students pass four courses to participate, and two states have a two-course minimum. Students in New York only must be enrolled in at least four courses to be eligible (Stevens 1990).

Underlying the controversy surrounding the no pass/no play policy is the issue of what role extracurricular activities should have in the schools. Positions regarding the nature of extracurricular activities differ, based on either the academic or the developmental perspective. The academic perspective focuses on intellectual competence and stresses that the purpose of schools is the pursuit of academic excellence and transmission of formal knowledge. In contrast, the developmental position stresses that schooling should provide experiences that enhance the total development of individual students. The controversy centers on the purpose of schools and one's accepted definition of education (Holland and Andre 1987).

Research conducted by the Agency related to participation has shown that students enrolled in compensatory education programs who participate in extracurricular activities are likely to be more successful academically than students enrolled in compensatory education programs who do not participate in extracurricular activities (TEA 1988). Other research has shown that participation is correlated with higher self-esteem, higher grades, higher educational aspirations, and lower delinquency rates (Holland and Andre 1987). From a youth development perspective, the meaningful participation of youth in activities is necessary for their healthy development (Konopka 1973).

A study conducted by the Austin Independent School District during the 1987-88 school year found that no pass/no play was a positive change. All students, especially those enrolled in extracurricular activities, were found to be failing fewer courses than prior to the implementation of the no pass/no play rule. Further, students were found to be staying in school longer despite no pass/no play and other educational reforms. According to the study, a negative result may be that students who before might have stayed in school to participate in varsity sports appear to be dropping out at a slightly higher rate (Ligon 1988).

In a survey of over 1,500 coaches, it was found that sports-related suspension rates varied for different regions of the state; that the rate of suspension increased with the size of the school population; and that junior high school boys had the highest suspension rates in the state. They also noted that approximately one out of every five high school boys who participated in sports was suspended as a result of the no pass/no play rule during the 1985-86 school year (Goudge and Augustin 1987).

Prior to this study, no Agency data have been available regarding the impact of no pass/no play on at-risk students. Data from the longitudinal study and the case study have provided information indicating the extent that these students have been affected by the rule.

Students in both the longitudinal study and the case study reported a positive attitude toward the no pass/no play rule. When students in the longitudinal study were asked whether the no pass/no play rule "encouraged you to work harder in your classes so that you can participate in extracurricular activities," 70 percent responded that it had resulted in their working harder. However, 30 percent reported that they did not work harder in their classes as a result of the rule. Students in the case study had a similar opinion.

> I think it's good because it makes the students try harder. If they really like a sport they want to play and it makes them really try. It's a good rule, unless it happens to you!

Even though students expressed a positive attitude about the rule, 44 percent of the students in the longitudinal study who responded to the question regarding the impact of the rule reported that they had been denied the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities because of the no pass/no play rule during the 1989-90 school year. The majority of students losing eligibility due to the no pass/no play rule were ineligible to participate for more than one six-week grading period.

Data were collected from the case study schools regarding the total number of at-risk students and "regular" students in the entire school failing one or more courses during the second and fifth grading periods of the 1989-90 school year. The reported percentage of all students in the school failing one or more courses, thus ineligible to participate, varied from 20 to 61 in the second grading period and from 30 to 50 during the fifth grading period (See Appendix I).

For at-risk students, it was reported that the students failing one or more courses varied from 29 percent during the second grading period to 88 percent during the fifth grading period. These data do not indicate the effect of the policy on students who would like to participate in extracurricular activities but were ineligible because of the rule. Rather, it is an indication of the percentage of students that would be affected had they chosen to participate. However, these data demonstrate the considerable variation across schools in the number of students failing one or more courses and may be an indication of the considerable variation across schools in terms of grading policies.

For students participating in extracurricular activities, data were collected for both at-risk and "regular" students. (See Appendix J). Of all students participating in extracurricular activities during the second grading period, the students ineligible to participate because of the no pass/no play rule ranged from 13 to 43 percent. For regular students, those ineligible ranged from 10 to 37 percent. For at-risk students, the students ineligible to participate because of the rule ranged from 14 to 63 percent. Two schools reported that 14 to 18 percent of the at-risk students were affected; two schools, 35 to 45 percent; and three schools, 54-63 percent. One school did not report these data. Similar patterns were found for the fifth grading period.

Interviews conducted with campus staff, faculty, and students indicated that there have been both negative and positive unintended consequences of the rule. A teacher described the effect of the rule on average students who participate in athletics in this way.

> I think that for the majority of what we call the average students . . . those that have to work to pass . . . it has had a very beneficial effect because I can see the difference when they are really concerned about doing the work, keeping their grades up. They are coming in and checking with me every week . . . "how am I doing?" . . . really getting serious about it until the season is over. When the last grade reporting period is over they just stop. They make sure they're eligible for the season and then you cannot get any work out of them.

Two positive unintended consequences have been that the no pass/no play rule has resulted in the coaches being brought "back into the school," and coordination between the teachers and the coaches has been improved. An additional finding was that more remedial efforts are being made to ensure that students pass their courses.

> From the standpoint of the coaches, I have seen more coach involvement in the academic situation of students because of no pass/no play. There is more follow-up by the coaches. They're checking into their kids' grades. They're encouraging the kids to keep their grades up. They're working with them. We have more study halls now. For freshman football, there is a mandatory study hall. The coaches are sharing the responsibility. . . that was not a part of the original intention. (Teacher)

Across students, faculty, and staff there was consensus that the penalty period should be reduced to three weeks.

> The policy is pretty good. It keeps people's grades up and it has helped a lot, but I don't think it should keep you from playing for six weeks. A lot of people say "I'm not going to be able to bring this grade up to play football, so what the heck." So they just keep doing worse and worse. (11th Grade Student)

> It's the six weeks that is the problem. The kid has no chance of going back and playing. If you want to teach him a lesson, he can learn it in three weeks, then he is put on probation for three weeks. If his grades go down, then that's it. At least it gives the kid a chance to go back. For a lot of students, that's why they're in school. (Principal)

In sum, positive consequences of the no pass/no play rule include the majority of students investing more effort in their schoolwork, making coaches more attentive to students' academic needs, and an increase in remedial efforts and coordination between the coaches and teachers. A negative consequence of the rule has been that considerable numbers of at-risk students have been unable to participate in extracurricular activities because of failing courses.

Driver's License Law

Little information is available about the implementation or the effect of the driver's license law that went into effect September 1, 1989. House Bill 850 requires anyone under the age of 18 requesting a driver's license to either (1) have a high school diploma or its equivalent or, (2) be currently enrolled in a high school equivalency examination program. Students must have been enrolled for at least 80 days in a high school program or at least 45 days in a high school equivalency program prior to the issuance of a driver's license. Students must present a form developed by the Agency and the Department of Public Safety to verify enrollment at the time of application for a driver's license.

As one indicator of student awareness of the law, ninth and tenth grade students in the longitudinal study were asked if the following statement is true: "If I drop out of school, I will lose my driver's license." Fifty percent of the students responded "yes" and fifty percent responded "no." These data suggest that efforts should be increased to publicize the law in schools, automobile repair shops, and places where youth congregate in the community. Linkages between the statewide driver's education courses and the policy should be considered to increase awareness of the law.

CHAPTER VII

DID THE POLICIES WORK?

Preliminary findings from the longitudinal study and the case study provide some information about the implementation of these four policies. Both intended and unintended effects have been identified. Data from the principal survey will complement these data and allow a more comprehensive analysis of the implementation of these policies.

The longitudinal data provide a basis for a continued cohort analysis that during the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years will provide measures of the effectiveness of these policies over time. Graduation rates and TAAS scores will provide outcome variables for two cohorts of students—the current (1990-91) eleventh and twelfth grade students.

Data from the case study will complement the longitudinal study and allow a continued analysis of graduation rates and TAAS scores over the next three years. Further assessment of the model of student relative risk will be a focus of the case study during the 1990-91 school year.

Two purposes for implementing the four policies discussed in this report were to increase student performance and to increase the graduation rate. Over time, there should be measurable increases in these two variables if the policies are having the intended effects. Changes in other areas of programming for at-risk students also should contribute to improved student performance and a lowered dropout rate. For example, the allocation of compensatory education funds for at-risk programs in districts with a dropout rate higher than the statewide average should contribute to improved student performance and a lowered dropout rate.

However, since there are overlapping populations of at-risk students it is clear that if policies are implemented in the same way in the future there likely will be significant numbers of students who will not graduate because these policies do not anticipate their situation. Examples from these preliminary findings show that these policies may be iatrogenic, that is, cause a population of dropouts.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

THE CONCEPT OF AT-RISK AS OPERATIONALIZED IN THE SCHOOLS

The first set of findings is related to the concept of at-risk as it has been applied in the school setting. Data from the interviews indicate that there are two definitions of at-risk. The formal definition of at-risk is based primarily on academic performance and uses indicators such as failing TEAMS, failing grades, or being retained one or more times. Many school districts add to this criteria as permitted by Board rule and include psycho-social variables (i.e. pregnancy, drug use). In addition to the formal definition of at-risk, counselors and teachers reported a second informal definition of at-risk that included a wide range of characteristics and behaviors.

The campus interview data support that there are two populations of at-risk students not identified by the state criteria: the "transitory at-risk student" and the "tuned-out" student. The transitory at-risk students are those who move into and out of risk status due to a personal/family crisis and who, as a consequence of that crisis, become at-risk because of the interactive effect of state policies such as the attendance rule and personal/family crises.

Students, faculty, and staff defined "tuned-out" students as those who "didn't care," who were not serious about learning, or who did not do their school work for a variety of reasons. This would include a wide variety of attitudes, orientations and behavior, and could be analyzed variously as subcultural role performance.

From a youth development perspective, these students would be more likely to apply themselves and participate in the school community (e.g., extracurricular activities) if they found school interesting. From this perspective, it is not an absence of the students' desire to learn, but an absence of perceived relevance to their lives as they see it that contributes to the overall "tuned-out" approach to schooling.

Whose Problem Is It?

Data from the interviews show that schools accept primary responsibility and underlying responsibility for these students and for enhancing their prospects for graduation and thus for a productive life. With this acceptance of responsibility has come an unintended exclusion of voluntary and public agencies and alternative programs inside and outside of school which could contribute to the enhancement of performance in school and other adolescent roles, for example, at home, in the community, and at church.

There is little explicit reference in the data to indicate that the student is an adolescent youth who participates in a variety of other roles in the community, with the exception of students in their role as parent, wage-earner, or baby-sitter in their own family.

Consequently, there is little mention of the school's contribution to the student's preparation for life other than in terms of academic or vocational preparation. Thus, excluded are decision-making skills and other typically adolescent developmental tasks.

Data from the interviews indicate that often responsibility for being at-risk is placed with the student because of failure to apply themselves and a lack of interest in learning or in their future. From this view, the problem is the student's problem and little can be done.

While school staff saw parents as bearing primary responsibility for their children, in many cases parents were perceived as not assuming this responsibility. When this happens, the school sees itself as being primarily responsible. In any event, it is clear that the question of who owns the problem is a practical question that many communities have not addressed because the school, parents, and the community have not shared the question. Schools visited expressed a willingness to discuss this question with others, but reported a lack of opportunity to do so at this time.

Would More Make A Difference?

Interviews with school staff and faculty indicate that they operate from a model in which they could serve more at-risk students and better serve them if only they had more resources, personnel, money, and time. The issue of whether more resources will result in higher graduation rates is an issue being debated nationally at some length. Aware that all such youth can never be served, a larger number and a greater proportion of those now being served or served inadequately would gain from additional resources such as new materials, better curriculum, and more counselors. More resources, such as more counselors, would likely result in better services for some students. Allowing that an increase in resources to do the same or similar things better or longer would make a difference in the lives of some students, it is clear that there will always be some students who will not benefit from these increases. For example, as reported by the case study schools, it is not uncommon for a counselor to have a caseload of 800 students in a large high school. The addition of one more counselor will make a difference, but is a ratio of four hundred students per counselor adequate? Other approaches are needed that will make a difference for a larger percentage of at-risk students who perceive insurmountable barriers to graduating within the current high school structure. These approaches could include a different learning environment, clinical interventions, a different home environment, foster care or group living arrangements.

A more radical (in terms of degree of change) set of different approaches found in the interview data and the literature include opportunities for a formal sabbatical from school and work in the community until the student is ready to re-enter school. Other examples include community-based service learning projects or other forms of experiential education or action-learning.

These latter alternatives demand school linkages to local businesses and other community clubs, agencies, and colleges or universities. Given the fiscal transfers to school districts as part of the current reform, it may be possible to evaluate whether, indeed, more is better and better is good enough.

Does the School Have to Change?

The data suggest that the policy changes have created strains on time, resources, and personnel in local schools. Principals, coordinators, and teachers suggested that an increase in fiscal resources would lead to a diminution of these strains, and in turn to more effective service for the target population. This increase in resources would lead to an improvement in services for some students. However, another perspective on the data and the literature suggests that more resources within the same school structure may not lead to proportionately more effective outcomes for students. What may be needed in addition are changes in the school: for example, in how it is organized; that is, how time is divided and used, how the curriculum is organized, and how student learning is designed.

There are liberal, moderate, and radical (in terms of degree of change) suggestions about school reorganization for the purpose of more efficiently serving students at educational risk. Many of these suggestions are in the literature and derive from actual program models in use throughout the United States (see Wehlage et al. 1989, Slavin et al. 1989). It is reasonable to suggest that the kind and degree of change necessary is, in part, a function of a community's expectations of the school and the community's willingness to allow certain kinds and numbers of students to fail in school, in relation to the school's willingness and ability to better serve the at-risk students. Another basic consideration is the number of at-risk students in the school.

Applying a consensual definition of 5 percent of "at-riskness" to the student population, it may be reasonable to serve these students better with no great changes in school structure or process with an increase in resources. However, in a school with an agreed upon population of 40 percent or more at-risk students, an increase in resources alone will likely be insufficient in serving the at-risk population.

The critical education qua political decision, in part, is related to continuing to seek more funding to do the same things better or to develop and implement new approaches that require changes within the school and linkages to community services. These decisions must be made at the local level with support from the Agency.

Prevention

Rarely did respondents attribute student risk status to "the nature of adolescence," except indirectly, as talking about being a teenage mother or being a son or daughter who had to work to bring in income. In the model of at-risk noted above, even when emphasis was put on the situational nature

of a student's risk status, no explicit reference was made to the student's developmental status as an adolescent. Indeed, little reference was made to the at-risk student as a member of his/her peer group and a participant in an "at-risk subculture" within the school and community. Thus prevention, which itself was never mentioned without probing, was envisioned as requiring early intervention in the home, in the school, and, even more rarely, in the community.

The most common response suggesting a prevention strategy was parent education, including the inculcation of the value of schooling and education.[4] This same value orientation must be re-emphasized as a community norm and find expression in a variety of community experiences and contexts. The school is a locus of preventive activity through early diagnosis of student capability, performance, and development—cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally. Thus high school teachers and counselors commented about their students' knowledge deficits and their limited learning skills. Prevention by the schools can also be thought of as implementing policies and programs that change social conditions leading to the development of at-risk youth.

A more developmentally sensitive preventive orientation would have distinguished that contribution made by the students' self, the peer group, and the youth culture. Clearly, and in a very real sense, some of this is not preventable and hence its contribution to student risk from the point of view of adult staff is an insurmountable barrier.

Implicit in the Agency's definition and definitions in use are concepts of development such as grade appropriate behavior, grade appropriate skills, and grade appropriate knowledge. This implies that youth change over time in their capacity and their ability and hence in how they perform the student role. Yet for some reason, an explicit developmental perspective in its psychological, sociological, and cultural richness, including cognitive development, moral development, ego development, friendship development, physical development and sexual development, are not part of everyday school discourse or of the conceptual models used to analyze students and to suggest intervention and prevention. The development of a youth policy for the state could lead to an increased sensitivity to the developmental stages and needs, not only in education but in other youth services as well.

As presented in the recommendations, the model of providing more of the same services for at-risk youth would lead to improved in-school services for some students. However, this is an incomplete approach. By sharing the responsibility for at-risk youth with the community, and by involving community services through programs such as Communities in Schools, a significant difference can be made in improving the student performance and graduation rates of at-risk youth. These efforts by themselves will not result in all students reaching the desired level of academic skills and development desired. However, involving more community services in combination with a restructuring of in-school services for at-risk youth that are based on a developmental model, may result in an increase in the number and type of opportunities for at-risk students to complete their high school education.

[4]Typically, prevention is defined as efforts to keep events from occurring, reduce the negative consequences, or shorten the length of time a disease occurs. Prevention can also be thought of as well-being and changes in social conditions that lead to the development of at-risk youth.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

List of Independent School Districts Participating in the Longitudinal Study

N = 50
1988-89 and 1989-90

Alamo Heights
Aldine
Alvin
Boerne
Bridge City
Bryan
Carrizo Springs
Center Point
Clear Creek
Cleveland
Conroe
Cotulla
Crosby
Crystal City
Deer Park
Dickinson
Dilley
East Central
Fort Bend
Fort Sam Houston
Friendswood
Harlandale
Hondo
Houston
Huffman
Humble
Jourdanton
Judson
Kerrville
Klein
Knippa
La Marque
La Porte
La Pryor
Lackland
Medina
Natalia
New Caney
Northeast
Northside
Pearsall
Port Arthur
Randolph Field
San Antonio
Somerset
South San Antonio
Spring Branch
Texas City
Uvalde
West Orange-Cove

List of Independent School Districts and High Schools Participating in the Case Study

N = 8
1989-90

Independent School District	High School
Hondo	Hondo High School
Alvin	Alvin High School
Crystal City	Crystal City High School
Texas City	Texas City High School
Cleveland	Cleveland High School
East Central	East Central High School
Harlandale	Harlandale High School
San Antonio	Lanier High School

APPENDIX B

Evaluation Strategy

Three components are included in the study of the impact of educational reform on at-risk students. These include 1) a longitudinal study of identified, at-risk high school students, 2) a case study of eight high schools, and 3) a statewide survey of high school principals' perceptions of the impact of educational reform on at-risk students. Findings from the case study component and preliminary analyses of the longitudinal component are included in this report. Two separate reports, providing more complete analysis of the longitudinal data and analysis of the principal survey, are being prepared and will be available from the Agency.

Triangulation was the research approach adopted for this study. Triangulation is the usage of a combination of research methods in order to study the same phenomena or programs (Patton 1980: 108). In this study, triangulation allows the comparison of data collected through quantitative methods with the faculty, staff, and student interview data. By using a variety of sources of data, the evaluation design is strengthened since the findings generated by different data collection strategies can be compared for consistency. In addition, several evaluators were used to review findings, a second type of triangulation. The combination of multiple methods, data sources, and evaluators help to overcome the intrinsic bias found in studies using single-methods and a single-analyst.

Longitudinal Component Year I (1988-89)

The longitudinal component of the study began during the 1988-89 school year and is scheduled to continue through the 1991-92 school year. In March of 1989, a letter was sent to all superintendents of school districts served by Education Service Centers IV and XX requesting their participation in the study. Fifty school districts agreed to participate.

In May of 1989, staff in participating school districts were requested to select a total of 2,530 students to participate in this longitudinal component of the study. Staff were requested to select ninth and tenth graders identified as at-risk students. Seventy percent were requested to be ninth graders and 30 percent tenth graders. The sample was stratified by average daily attendance. Districts were requested to select 10 to 480 students, depending on the size of the district. Table I provides the number of students requested to participate in the study on the basis of the average daily attendance (ADA) of the participating districts.

TABLE 1

Number of Students Requested to be Selected by Participating Districts for the Longitudinal Study Sample (1988-89)

ADA	Percent of Sample	Number of Students	Number of High Schools	Number of Students Per High School
<500-9,999	18	450	45	10
10,000-24,999	23	600	40	15
25,000-49,999	22	580	29	20
50,000+	37	900	30	30
TOTAL	100	2,530	144	

Instructions for selecting the sample of students and for completing the data collection instruments were mailed to the contact person in each district. The five criteria for selecting students included:

a) The student met one or more of the following at-risk criteria:

- has failed the Texas Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS)
- has low standardized achievement test scores (below 40th national percentile)
- has high absentee rates (more than five unexcused absences per semester)
- has failing grades
- has been retained
- has chronic health problems that have resulted in more than 15 excused or unexcused absences per semester
- has drug/substance abuse problems
- has attended school in a residential treatment center of either the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) or a drug treatment facility
- is pregnant
- is married
- is a teenage parent
- works more than 20 hours per week

b) The student participated in extracurricular activities affected by the no pass/no play rule during the 1988-89 school year.

c) The student was not enrolled in Special Education.

d) The student had not informed the school staff that he or she would not return to the campus in the fall of 1989.

e) The student has a reasonably complete permanent record file.

Students were randomly selected to ensure a representative sample. Staff in schools were requested to select every tenth student from a roster of students enrolled on the campus who met the selection criteria.

School counselors completed the data collection instrument for each student in the sample. The data collection instrument contained a total of 71 items. Each counselor completed approximately five to ten data collection instruments, and districts were remunerated $10 for each National Computer Systems (NCS) general purpose answer sheet completed, verified, and returned to the Agency. The Agency recommended that counselors be paid for their efforts in order to improve the quality of the data collection. Information was collected regarding the effects of the attendance policy, TEAMS scores, the no pass/no play rule, achievement test scores, enrollment in regular or non-college bound (Correlated Language Arts, Fundamentals of Mathematics) courses, and other detailed information.

A total of 1,973 completed NCS answer sheets providing data for students enrolled in 95 high schools were returned to the Agency in July of 1989. Staff at Education Service Center Region XX scored these answer sheets and compiled them onto a computer tape for Agency use. All data were then summarized and analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software for data analysis. Table 2 presents the number of completed NCS answer sheets returned to the Agency by average daily attendance of the district. A comparison of Table 1 and Table 2 shows that five hundred fifty-seven (557) fewer students were selected by staff in participating districts than were requested by the Agency.

TABLE 2

Number of Students Selected by Participating Districts for the Longitudinal Study (1988-89)

ADA	Percent of Sample	Number of Students	Number of High Schools
<500-9,999	21	413	36
10,000-24,999	26	512	19
25,000-49,999	19	383	12
50,000	34	665	28
TOTAL	100	1,973	95

The sample of students were 69 percent ninth graders and 31 percent tenth graders during the 1988-89 school year. Fifty-eight percent are male and 42 percent female. Forty-one percent are Hispanic; 37 percent, White, not Hispanic; 21 percent, Black, not Hispanic; and Asian and other, less than one percent. Although the return percentages are reasonably consistent with the requested sample, current lack of data regarding the percentage of state-defined at-risk students by district type restricts statements concerning the representativeness of the sample. The fall 1990 PEIMS data collection will provide the number of identified at-risk students statewide and their demographic characteristics so that comparisons between the sample and students statewide can be made. These data are expected to be available in spring 1991.

Year II (1989-90)

In the second year of the longitudinal component, data collection instruments for both counselors and students and a transmittal form were distributed to *each of the 50 participating school districts.* Data were requested for each of the 1,973 students for whom data had been returned during Year I of the study.

The counselor data collection instrument included 60 items and requested information about the student's current enrollment status, course credits earned, grade point average, and types of services provided to the student such as mentorship program, vocational program, or dropout prevention program. Counselors completed the data collection instrument for a total of 1,802 students. If the students selected for the sample were currently enrolled in the district, the counselors distributed the student data collection instrument to be completed by each student. Of the student data collection instruments counselors were requested to distribute to students, 1,175 (65%) were completed and returned to the Agency. This relatively low return rate was a result of two factors. First, not all counselors distributed the data collection instrument to students. Second, some students chose not to participate in the study. Districts were again remunerated $10 for each completed NCS answer sheet returned to the Agency.

Detailed information was requested from each student about the impact of the attendance policy, the TEAMS exit-level examination, the no pass/no play rule, and the driver's license law. Students also answered questions about their educational aspirations, high school academic program, learning style, and involvement in extracurricular activities both in and out of school. The student data collection instrument contained a total of 166 items.

The transmittal form was completed by the high school counselor and requested the enrollment status for each student in the following categories:

- currently enrolled on the same campus
- transferred to another campus within the same district
- transferred to another school district, school, or institution and requested transcripts
- transferred to another school district, school, or institution but did not request transcripts
- dropped out
- other (died, expelled)

Space was provided on the form for the district staff to enter the student's name, identification number (social security number or district identification number), and the address where the student's transcript had been sent. This information will be used to follow the student for the third year of the study (1990-91). All data collected are confidential as specified by the Open Records Act.

Staff at Education Service Center Region XX transferred information on the NCS answer sheets onto computer tape for Agency use. All data were then summarized and analyzed using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software for data analysis.

A separate report presenting findings of the first two years of the longitudinal study is being prepared and will be available from the Agency. Data collection for Year III of the longitudinal component will take place in the spring of 1991.

Case Study Component Year I (1989-90)

The case study of eight high schools selected from the 50 school districts participating in the longitudinal component began during the 1989-90 school year and is scheduled to continue through the 1992-93 school year. Two components are included in the case study. The first consisted of a data collection instrument sent to each campus selected requesting detailed information about the campus, identified at-risk, and regular (not identified as at-risk) students. The second component consisted of a site visit made to each campus in the spring of 1990.

Letters were sent to all 50 districts participating in the longitudinal component of the study requesting participation in the case study. Twenty-five districts agreed to participate. After the Agency staff reviewed data such as size of the school, percent minority, percent passing TEAMS, and dropout rate for each high school in these 25 districts, staff in seventeen districts' schools were contacted by telephone to determine the availability and range of services for at-risk learners. Final selection of the eight schools was based upon representation in the range of sizes of schools, in some geographic and ethnic diversity, and in the range in the number of services for at-risk students.

The campus data collection instrument requested detailed information about the entire campus, including enrollment, test scores, and other descriptive information. In addition, information was collected about the impact of the attendance policy, TEAMS exit-level examination, no pass/no play, and the driver's license law on both at-risk and regular students. Considerable staff effort was required in the participating districts to provide these data. Campuses do not routinely collect this information in the manner requested for the study. Districts were reimbursed between $500 and $1,000 (depending on the size of the campus) for collecting these data.

In the spring of 1990, Agency staff members from the Division of Program Evaluation made site visits to each of the eight schools. During the site visits, interviews lasting from one to two hours were conducted separately with the district's at-risk coordinator, the campus principal, a counselor, and a teacher. Also, a group interview technique was conducted with one or two 11th grade classes in each school. Students enrolled in either Correlated Language Arts or regular English participated in the group interviews.

Interview guides were developed in cooperation with a contractor. The interview guides listed questions and issues to be explored during the interviews. These lists were not intended to be used as tightly structured sets of questions to produce a range of likely responses. Rather, the purpose was to ensure that each interviewee was asked the same questions. The interview guides also helped ensure that the limited time available for each interview was efficiently used.

The interview guides and the campus data collection instrument were mailed to each district contact person and each campus principal at least two weeks in advance of the site visit. In this way, staff were better prepared to provide complete and more thoughtful responses. Prior to the interview, the purpose of the study was explained to the interviewees, and permission was asked to tape-record the interview. Tape recording is indispensable to interview procedures, since it does not "tune-out" conversations or change what has been said because of the interpretation, and it allows the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee. Extractions from each of the interviews conducted were processed using the Microsoft Word software package.

After the interviews had been processed, The Ethnograph software package was used for analysis. The Ethnograph is a set of interactive, menu driven computer programs designed to assist the qualitative researcher in some of the mechanical aspects of data analysis. By coding passages from the interviews, this software package allows the data to be indexed, sorted, and recombined in a variety of ways. For example, the interviews were sorted by role (such as principal or teacher) and then classified into categories such as no pass/no play or use of the at-risk identification criteria.

During the summer of 1990, a contractor visited each campus to review the campus data collection instrument with the campus principal. The purpose of this review was to verify the accuracy of the data submitted. Data were then processed using LOTUS 1-2-3 software and descriptive statistical procedures were performed.

The data collection for Year II of the case study will take place in the spring of 1991.

TABLE 3

Campus Characteristics of High Schools Participating in the Case Study
1989-1990

High School	Total Enrollment	Percent At-Risk, State Definition Only	Percent At-Risk, State + Local Definition	Percent Free/Reduced Price Lunch	Percent Minority	Percent LEP	Percent Migrant	PEIMS Dropouts	PEIMS Dropout Rate	Percent PEIMS Dropout Identified At-Risk
High School #1	2537	32%	32%	18%	44%	2%	1%	183	7%	52%
High School #2	741	37%	37%	22%	21%	1%	0%	54	7%	63%
High School #3	619	44%	53%	75%	100%	63%	48%	59	9%	92%
High School #4	1620	18%	31%	19%	39%	1%	0%	42	3%	48%
High School #5	2041	62%	N/A	48%	94%	14%	1%	79	4%	N/A
High School #6	464	17%	22%	28%	48%	1%	1%	41	9%	95%
High School #7	1746	25%	19%	72%	100%	13%	4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School #8	1608	26%	29%	13%	22%	1%	0%	86	5%	N/A

N/A—Data not provided

TABLE 4*

Relative Frequency of Use of Criteria for the Identification of At-Risk Students

Longitudinal Component
1988-89

Criteria	N	Percent
Has failing grades	1376	76%
Has failed TEAMS	1119	62%
Has low achievement test scores (below 40th percentile)	1056	58%
Has been retained	679	38%
Has high absentee rates (higher than 10 percent rate of absenteeism)	421	23%
Works more than 20 hours per week	81	4%
Has chronic health problems that result in more than 15 absences per semester	76	4%
Is pregnant	12	2%
Is a teenage parent	29	2%
Has attended school in a residential treatment center of either Texas Youth Commission (TYC) or a drug treatment facility	25	1%
Is married	6	<1%

*Table 4 represents a duplicated count. Students may be identified by more than one criteria.

APPENDIX E

A Grounded Model of Student Relative Risk

An Unexpected Finding
Case Study

The campus interview data suggest that the state's policies did not define as students at-risk two populations identified by students and school staff and faculty. These are "tuned-out" students and "transitional at-risk" students who came to be at-risk because of the interactive effect of state policies (e.g., attendance) and personal/family crisis.

By "tuned-out," students, faculty, and staff meant students who "didn't care," who were "goofing-off," who were not serious about learning, who did not do their school work—for whatever reasons. This is a wide variety of attitudes, orientations and behavior, and could be analyzed variously as student subcultural role performance, individual troubles, or the like. The "transitory" risk students are those who move into and out of risk status due to a personal/family crisis; and who, as a consequence of that crisis, get caught in the attendance policy.

Putting these two grounded criteria for defining risk to those in the state policies results in the following:

- Those students identified by state policies (Identified).
- Those students defined in the case study interviews (Tuned-out and Transitory Risk).

The resulting mix suggests a grounded model of risk, in technical terms, a model of relative risk (which could become a model of attributable risk).

In technical public health epidemiology, the source (after the insurance industry) of the logic, mathematics and practical use of the terms risk and at-risk, relative risk is defined as follows:

- Relative Risk—the ratio of the incidence of the disease among those exposed to the incidence among those not exposed (MacMahon, Pugh, and Ipson 1960).
- Attributable Risk—the absolute incidence of the disease in exposed individuals can be attributed to the exposure (*Ibid*).

Attached is an illustration of the model, presented as a table. In this table, the highest risk to poor achievement and dropping out lies in the cell labeled "1," while the lowest risk lies in the cell labeled "8." At this time, there are three clusters of risk with face validity only; high ("1," "2," and "3"), moderate ("4," "5," and "6") and low ("7," and "8").

These distinctions were arrived at in this way. Students who were identified using state definitions would be likely to be paid attention to and, possibly, be offered and would use special services. Thus students so identified who also were **not** "tuned-out" and were **not** in transitory crisis were put at the lowest risk ("8"). Students who were identified by Agency criteria, were not in crisis, but were "tuned-out" were at the second lowest risk ("7").

On the other end, highest relative risk is assigned to those who were not identified by the Agency criteria, but were **both** tuned-out and had transitory crises ("1"); next were those who had not been identified by the state criteria but, as a consequence of Agency policies, suffered because of transitory crises ("2"). Since transitory crises **per se** and their consequence on the student due to Agency policies is so severe, when it is combined with "tuning-out," relative risk is enhanced ("3").

In the middle group are students who were not identified by Agency policies, did not have transitory crises, and did ("5") or did not ("6") tune-out. These latter students need another word. It was reasoned that students who were **not** identified when they should **not** be (true negative) overlap those who were not identified when they should have been (false negative). Since transitory crises, per se, are troublesome, then cell "4" is also a moderate risk group. Note that a student not identified at one time as at-risk could be identified later.

Data from the case study and the Student Dropout Research Project of the Texas A&M School/University Research Collaborative indicate that significant numbers of students who are dropping out are not being identified as at-risk. Perhaps some of these unidentified dropouts would be in the categories "transitional" or "tuned-out" at-risk students. Examination of school attendance committee records and interviews with school staff and students during Year II of the case study (Spring 1991), will provide a basis for testing the model and its implications for resource allocation. Identification of these two categories (transitional, tuned-out) is not intended to suggest that these categories should be added to existing state-mandated identification criteria. However, district staff may want to consider whether they have these students in their schools when determining what service will be provided and who will be served.

In a rational planning model, relative risk should drive the allocation of resources. Currently, many schools identify considerably more students as at-risk than can be adequately served. Further development and refinement of the model of relative risk will provide a basis for ranking and sorting the at-risk population so that students most at-risk will be those chosen to be served. Current definitions of at-risk in the schools do not take the notion of risk as a relative term into account.

A Grounded Model of Student Relative Risk

	Not Transitional		Transitional	
	Not Tuned-Out	**Tuned-Out**	**Not Tuned-Out**	**Tuned-Out**
Not Identified	Not Identified Not Transitional Not Tuned-Out Not At-Risk **Risk Factor 6**	Not Identified Not Transitional Tuned-Out Relative Risk (Pure Case) **Risk Factor 5**	Not Identified Transitional Not Tuned-Out Risk (Pure Case) **Risk Factor 2**	Not Identified Transitional Tuned-Out Highest Risk **Risk Factor 1**
Identified	Identified Not Transitional Not Tuned-Out Low Risk Possible (False Positive) **Risk Factor 8**	Identified Not Transitional Tuned-Out Relative Risk **Risk Factor 7**	Identified Transitional Not Tuned-Out Relative Low Risk **Risk Factor 4**	Identified Transitional Tuned-Out Relative High Risk **Risk Factor 3**

High Risk
Risk Factor 1
Risk Factor 2
Risk Factor 3

Medium Risk
Risk Factor 4
Risk Factor 5
Risk Factor 6

Low Risk
Risk Factor 7
Risk Factor 8

TABLE 5

Number and Percentage of Students Who Lost Credit in Course Work Due to the Attendance Policy

Case Study
1989-90

High School	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12		Campus	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
High School 1										
At-Risk	66	27%	14	7%	14	9%	3	4%	97	14%
*All Students	104	23%	19	6%	0		5	2%	128	9%
High School 2										
At-Risk	8	11%	1	1%	4	6%	1	2%	14	5%
Regular	3	2%	3	3%	0		1	1%	7	2%
All Students	11	4%	4	2%	4	3%	2	1%	21	3%
High School 3										
At-Risk	14	13%	11	15%	4	6%	7	9%	36	11%
Regular	3	5%	1	1%	2	4%	4	10%	10	4%
All Students	17	10%	12	8%	6	5%	11	9%	46	8%
High School 4										
At-Risk	0		4	2%	0		0		4	<1%
Regular	0		2	<1%	1	<1%	1	<1%	4	<1%
All Students	0		6	1%	1	<1%	1	<1%	8	<1%
High School 5										
**At-Risk	96	16%	62	16%	45	13%	14	4%	217	13%
Regular	2	2%	7	7%	4	7%	3	5%	16	5%
All Students	98	14%	69	14%	49	12%	17	4%	233	11%
High School 6										
At-Risk	4	10%	0		0		0		4	4%
Regular	3	3%	0		0		0		3	<1%
All Students	7	5%	0		0		0		7	2%
High School 7										
At-Risk	40	58%	25	25%	25	21%	8	17%	98	29%
*All Students	45	8%	21	5%	10	3%	7	3%	83	5%
High School 8										
At-Risk	17	16%	26	18%	10	8%	9	9%	62	13%
Regular	26	9%	20	9%	17	7%	8	3%	71	7%
All Students	43	11%	46	12%	27	8%	17	5%	133	9%

*Data were not reported separately for regular students.
**Count includes identified Special Education students

TABLE 6*

Number and Percentage of At-Risk Students Requesting Attendance Waivers and Waivers Granted

Case Study
1989-90

High School	Number of Attendance Waivers Requested By At-Risk Students	% At-Risk Students Requesting Attendance Waivers	% Waivers Granted to At-Risk Student
High School #1	204	30%	60%
High School #2	106	39%	87%
High School #3	25	8%	84%
High School #4	0	N/A	N/A
High School #5	129	10%	45%
High School #6	23	23%	91%
High School #7	22	7%	64%
High School #8	223	47%	72%

*Table 6 represents a duplicated count. Students may have requested and have been granted credit in both the fall and spring semesters.

APPENDIX H

TABLE 7

Number and Percentage of At-Risk Students Mastering the 11th Grade Exit-Level TEAMS

1989-90

	Subtest	Number of Students Tested (N)	Percent Mastering
Statewide	Mathematics	34,409	61%
	Language Arts	38,483	78%
Longitudinal	Mathematics	478	56%
	Language Arts	421	73%
Case Study			
High School #1	Mathematics	100	72%
	Language Arts	101	81%
High School #2	Mathematics	76	43%
	Language Arts	76	76%
High School #3	Mathematics	30	50%
	Language Arts	25	48%
High School #4	Mathematics	120	80%
	Language Arts	120	95%
High School #5	Mathematics	214	54%
	Language Arts	215	78%
High School #6	Mathematics	13	93%
	Language Arts	12	86%
High School #7	Mathematics	121	55%
	Language Arts	72	42%
High School #8	Mathematics	104	61%
	Language Arts	100	32%

APPENDIX I

Number and Percentage of Students Failing One or More Courses—Second and Fifth Six-Week Grading Periods

Case Study
1989-90

TABLE 8

Second Grading Period

High School	HS #1	HS #2	HS #3	HS #4	HS #5	HS #6	HS #7	HS #8
Total number of students failing one or more courses	856	151	344	513	N/A	145	502	626
Percent Total	41%	20%	61%	32%	N/A	31%	29%	42%
Number of at-risk students failing one or more courses	284	79	238	278	N/A	47	213	256
Percent At-Risk	42%	29%	72%	55%	N/A	47%	63%	54%
Number of regular students failing one or more courses	572	72	106	235	N/A	98	289	370
Percent regular students	40%	15%	46%	21%	N/A	27%	21%	37%

TABLE 9

Fifth Grading Period

High School	HS #1	HS #2	HS #3	HS #4	HS #5	HS #6	HS #7	HS #8
Total number of students failing one or more courses	822	222	282	611	974	143	643	726
Percent Total	39%	30%	50%	38%	48%	31%	37%	49%
Number of at-risk students failing one or more courses	291	131	200	266	878	40	298	240
Percent At-Risk	43%	48%	60%	53%	69%	40%	88%	51%
Number of regular students failing one or more courses	531	91	82	345	96	103	345	486
Percent Regular Students	37%	20%	35%	31%	12%	28%	25%	48%

N/A—Data not provided

TABLE 10

Percentage of Students Ineligible to Participate in Extracurricular Activities

Case Study
1989-90

High School	HS #1	HS #2	HS #3	HS #4	HS #5	HS #6	HS #7	HS #8
Campus								
2nd Grading Period	43%	32%	14%	39%	N/A	13%	21%	42%
5th Grading Period	41%	31%	13%	32%	6%	10%	25%	49%
At-Risk Students								
2nd Grading Period	45%	35%	18%	54%	N/A	14%	63%	54%
5th Grading Period	47%	43%	17%	57%	9%	10%	N/A	51%
Regular Students								
2nd Grading Period	N/A	30%	10%	32%	N/A	13%	N/A	37%
5th Grading Period	N/A	24%	9%	20%	2%	10%	N/A	48%

N/A—Data not provided

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

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